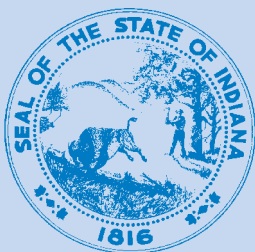


State Representative

# Jim Bottorff

## The 2000 Session of the Indiana Legislature



How To Reach  
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Jim Bottorff

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March, 2000

Dear Friends,

The 2000 session of the Indiana General Assembly ended on March 3.

We passed several significant pieces of legislation, including a plan to distribute the funds Indiana will receive from the tobacco settlement and a proposal to increase benefits for workers severely injured on the job. We also adjusted the unemployment compensation system, making improvements for both workers and employers.

I have detailed several new laws in this newsletter and have included some other information that you might find useful.

In the coming months, I will be working on interim study committees. Study committees allow legislators the opportunity to explore subjects in greater depth than is permitted during the session.

Please contact my office at 1-800-382-9842 if you have questions or concerns regarding state government.

Sincerely,



### ***E-mail updates available on state legislative issues***

Several people have indicated to me that they would like to receive e-mail updates on legislative issues and other issues important to our district. I am pleased to offer this service through my legislative office.

Simply e-mail or call my office and I will add you to this list. I am excited about the technological advances over the past few years that allow you nearly instant access to legislative news and information.

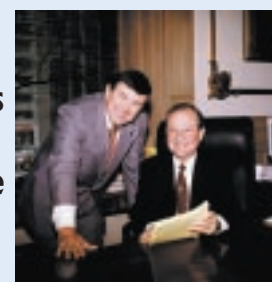
### ***Inside this newsletter***

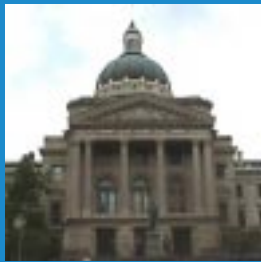
**Tobacco Settlement**

**Helping Working Families**

**I-65 Construction Update**

**School Safety**





## Session News

### School safety

School buses will be required to display the school or school district and its corresponding number on the back and top of the vehicles. This new requirement will make it easier to identify school buses and students in an emergency. In the case of an overturned school bus, officials will be able to identify the bus and find out where it is from in order to notify parents and locate medical information on students.

National concern about school safety played a role in passage of legislation that allows school security plans to remain confidential. The legislation also provides that school boards may meet in private to discuss the assessment, design and implementation of school safety and security measures.

We also enacted legislation that stiffens the penalties for speeding violations near a school to a Class B infraction. The maximum penalty for this offense is \$1,000.

## Legislature allocates tobacco funds

### Bi-partisan agreement to help seniors and low income groups

Certainly one of the biggest achievements of the 2000 session is the legislation that sets up a system to allocate the more than \$200 million from the national tobacco settlement over the next 25 years to health care services, tobacco prevention programs and assistance for low income people who have trouble purchasing prescription drugs.

The final bill was the result of many months of work in the legislative aisle. From the start, we have attempted to assure that the money is used in the best care and efforts to reduce the use of tobacco products.

In the first year alone, \$35 million will be dedicated toward health care programs, with an emphasis on tobacco education and prevention. Another \$20 million will be used to help seniors on low incomes purchase needed prescription drugs. Community health centers will receive \$15 million in program support, along with a one-time-only appropriation of \$10 million to make physical improvements to facilities.

This is a considerable accomplishment for a short session of the Legislature, and it is a tribute to the willingness of officials to set aside partisan differences in order to pass bills that will have long-term benefits for the people of our state.



Rep. Bottorff discusses legislation with Rep. Bill Cochran.

### Settlement will help rural Indiana, farmers

The national tobacco settlement legislation approved this session provides a framework to help rural Indiana and farmers who grow the product. While no money was appropriated to help in these two areas, the final bill does create two funds that eventually will dedicate assistance to areas of the state that will suffer economically through the loss of tobacco production.

The Rural Community Impact Fund will help develop new agricultural enterprises in those cities and towns, including facilities for research and development, new market opportunities, educational and leadership development programs and direct financial assistance. The Tobacco Farmers Impact Fund will help producers make a successful transition to alternative, economically viable commodities and support efforts to preserve and maintain Indiana family farms and farmland.

### Senior citizens will also see benefits

Senior citizens on lower incomes should not have to choose between buying food or the prescription drugs they need to remain healthy. Thanks to the legislation allocating money from the national tobacco settlement, they won't have to make that decision.

The final bill includes \$20 million to help low income seniors purchase prescription drugs. From my visits around the district, this is one of the most pressing concerns among older Hoosiers. Some people even have been forced to drive as far as Canada to get these drugs at a more affordable rate.

## REVIVE 65

### \$250 million improvements planned for I-65

REVIVE 65 is a five-year, \$250 million investment in improving Interstate 65 in Southern Indiana. The focus of the project is a 10-mile stretch of road from the Ohio River to Sellersburg. The heavily travelled road has deteriorated and needs rebuilding. It also needs additional lanes to safely meet traffic demands.

Every attempt to mitigate the inconvenience to travellers will be made. INDOT is committed to keeping two lanes in each direction open during daylight hours, keeping off-ramps open and limiting on-ramp closures. If you have questions or concerns, contact INDOT at (317) 232-5533.

You may also want to check out the project's website, [www.revive65.com](http://www.revive65.com), which offers information such as maps, timelines and the latest construction information. INDOT will also have construction updates available on the radio at 530 AM.

### REVIVE 65 Construction plan for 2000

Construction this year will focus on:

- Widening I-65 from the Kentucky Bridge to the L&I Railroad overpass
- Grading and fill work from the Eastern Boulevard to north of State Road 131 in preparation for final construction in future years
- Adding temporary pavement to the northbound and southbound lanes of I-65 from the L&I Railroad overpass to north of State Road 60
- Completing reconstruction of State Road 311 interchange near Sellersburg



## Session News Ten Commandments

Legislators from both sides of the aisle helped pass a new law that would give state and local governments the right to display the Ten Commandments on public property.

Many legislators feel that this legislation reflects the sentiments of a majority of the people of Indiana that our country was founded on the principles contained in the Ten Commandments. Legislators expressed their views that the Ten Commandments are as important as any laws in helping define what makes this country so great.

The final decision on putting up a historic display containing the Commandments would be left up to local officials, who also would decide what version of the Commandments to display.

## Laser Pointers

It is now illegal to direct a laser pointer at a law enforcement official. These laser pointers are often used as toys, but law enforcement officials can easily misidentify laser pointers as weapons. The penalty for directing a laser pointer at a police officer is a Class B misdemeanor.

## Helping working men and women

### Benefits increased for those injured on the job

Legislators have approved measures that will make substantial changes in coverage for workers who are injured on the job and improve benefits for those people who have lost their jobs.

Around 90 percent of Indiana workers who receive a disabling injury in a workplace accident will see their compensation increase close to 50 percent. There are improvements in the one-time cash payments made to a person who suffers a permanent partial impairment in a workplace accident. The change will help any worker determined to have up to the 30th degree of impairment, which includes around 90 percent of all injured employees. Weekly disability payments also will increase.

Indiana workers who lose their jobs will see unemployment compensation increase by 33 percent over the next three years. The maximum benefit will increase from \$252 to \$336 by July 2002. To finance the increase, the state will use a larger share of the unemployment trust fund, a move that will cut premium payments by employers by nearly \$80 million over the next two years.



## Rep. Jim Bottorff

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Call the Statehouse toll-free  
1-800-382-9842

\*See inside to add your name  
to my e-mail update group\*

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## State legislative web site

The state web site provides a great deal of information about state government, the legislative process and other related items. The main site at [www.state.in.us](http://www.state.in.us) offers a nice starting point to explore government in Indiana.

From that starting point, you can visit the home pages of elected state officials and state agencies. In addition, several premium services are available for a monthly fee.

I encourage you to visit my web site at [www.state.in.us/R71](http://www.state.in.us/R71) and explore various items related to the legislature.

A new feature on my web site will allow you to request various House publications. We currently offer publications specifically designed for senior citizens, grade-school children, and high school students in the process of choosing a college. Other publications give a general overview of various Indiana state agencies, offer a guide to women's health and advise how to avoid being the victim of a scam. There is also a booklet available which details every bill that became law during this year's legislative session.

You may also request booklets by calling my legislative office at 1-800-382-9842.



A screen shot of my legislative home page

### Top Five State Web Sites\*

1. State Job Bank
2. Hoosier Lottery Homepage
3. Attorney General's Unclaimed Property Search
4. General Assembly homepage
5. Dept. of Environmental Management homepage

\*Based on number of visitors as of February 25, 2000